

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 8, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Angus McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Programming for Academically Gifted Students

ORIGINATOR: Bob Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support Services

RESOURCE STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Barbara Morgan McDermid, Janet Thomas

INFORMATION

TRUSTEE REQUEST #20. JANUARY 11, 2005. (TRUSTEE GIBSON) PROVIDE A REPORT TO BOARD PRIOR TO BUDGET DELIBERATIONS THAT WOULD:

- **IDENTIFY ALL THE VARIOUS PROGRAMS FOR ACADEMICALLY GIFTED STUDENTS OFFERED WITHIN THE DISTRICT,**
 - **EXPLAIN HOW THE DISTRICT ALLOCATES FUNDS TO SUPPORT THESE PROGRAMS AND ANNUAL CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATION POLICY AND FUNDING FORMULA WITHIN THE PAST 3 YEARS (INCLUDING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR), AND**
 - **SUMMARIZE THE ENROLMENT IN EACH OF THESE PROGRAMS FOR EACH OF THE PAST 3 YEARS (INCLUDING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR).**
- *PROVIDE THIS DATA SPECIFIC TO THE ACADEMIC CHALLENGE PROGRAM IN THE EVENT THAT THIS PROGRAM IS NO LONGER RECOGNIZED BY THAT NAME.**

This report provides information requested by trustees regarding programming for academically gifted students, including related allocations and enrolments.

Background

District gifted programming began in 1970, expanding in the 1980s to include the International Baccalaureate Program. In 1984 Academic Challenge was established for elementary and junior high students demonstrating advanced intellectual and academic abilities. Eligible students attended community schools or congregated district centre classes.

The district has continued to develop programs that meet needs of students with advanced intellectual abilities, academic skills and/or talents.

- Academically gifted students benefit from second language, Academic Alternative, Cogito, Early and Middle Years International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement Programs.
- Academically and/or intellectually gifted students who demonstrate talents may choose Sports Alternative, Arts Core or Visual and Performing Arts Programs.
- Other gifted students attend locally developed community school programming, distance or home schooling.

These diverse programming options continue to serve a broad range of needs within an extremely diverse group of gifted and talented students.

Declining Academic Challenge enrolment precipitated a comprehensive program review. From 1997-2000, staff, parent and student feedback, principal input, and work of an expert committee resulted in initiatives refining district programming for intellectually and academically gifted students. October 2003 and February 2004 board reports detailed the Academic Challenge Review and resulting district initiatives.

Programs for Academically Gifted Students

Gifted and talented students demonstrate advanced abilities compared with others of their age. Each gifted student demonstrates an individual profile of advanced performance in one or a combination of the following areas:

- cognitive ability
- academic skills
- talents

Because areas of giftedness frequently overlap, it is difficult to define a particular group of students as academically gifted. Although a program may suit academically gifted students, students attending that program may be academically able, or academically and intellectually able. In other cases, academically able students pursue studies aligned with their talents. With this in mind, the following district offerings appear best suited for the group generally defined as academically gifted:

- second language, Academic Alternative, Cogito, Advanced Placement, Early and Middle Years International Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement Programs
- locally developed community school programs (e.g. honor programs)
- distance or home schooling
- Academic Challenge
 - Eligible students demonstrate advanced intellectual *and* academic abilities.
 - Served elementary students through 2003-2004. Continues through 2004-2005 for eligible *junior high* students, pending district review of emerging junior high programs for high ability students.

New programs established during the 2004-2005 school year include:

- Elementary Challenge (Eligibility largely based on academic achievement.)
- K-9 Extensions (Eligibility based on extremely high intellectual ability, and a requirement for substantially differentiated, individualized educational programming.)

Funding and Allocations

Funding for gifted and talented is included as part of per pupil grants from Alberta Education.

Through 2003-2004, Division II and III students identified and coded Gifted and Talented (Academic Challenge) accessed Level 3 additive allocations. Division I students coded Gifted and Talented (Academic Challenge) have been served through the district's Early Reading Initiative.

In 2004-2005, as part of an approved transition plan, students coded Gifted and Talented access the following allocations:

Level 1 Allocation	Eligible Challenge students. (Eligible Division I Challenge students continue to be served by the district's Early Reading Initiative.)
0.5 of Level 3 Allocation	Previously coded Academic Challenge students (Division II and III).
Level 5 Allocation	Eligible Extensions students. (This newly approved program supports highly differentiated, individualized educational programming to meet needs of students with extremely high intellectual ability.)

In 2005-2006, students coded Gifted and Talented (Challenge and Academic Challenge) access Level 1 allocations. Extensions students continue to access Level 5 allocations.

Enrollment History

The following table outlines district enrolment history for students coded Gifted and Talented who attend district centres and community schools.

District Elementary Students Coded Gifted and Talented

	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Div. I Elementary Academic Challenge	17	14	--
Div. I Elementary Challenge	--	--	39
Div. II Elementary Academic Challenge	169	168	--
Div. II Elementary Challenge			133
Extensions Elementary*			10
Totals	186	182	177

District Junior High Students Coded Gifted and Talented

Junior High Academic Challenge	551	430	356
Total Students Coded Gifted and Talented K-9*	737	612	533

Trends

Since a high enrolment of 2,111 students in 1996-1997, a steady decline in district students coded Gifted and Talented has been evident. This trend continues at the junior high level into 2004-2005.

Elementary Challenge district centre principals note an increasing population of identified students concurrent with the establishment of Challenge in fall, 2004. The principals predict steady growth. More young students are being identified for district centre programming as reflected in Challenge district centre enrollments below:

District Centre Elementary Students Coded Gifted and Talented

	2002-2003 Academic Challenge	2003-2004 Academic Challenge	2004-2005 Challenge
Totals	56	47	73

Summary

New district initiatives in gifted education include supports for:

- early identification and intervention
- identification of and programming for more gifted students at all levels
- implementation of new Challenge and Extensions programming
- emerging programming for highly able junior high students

This district work has been undertaken to support and enhance work of schools in ensuring superb results for all students, including those who are highly able.

BMM/jt